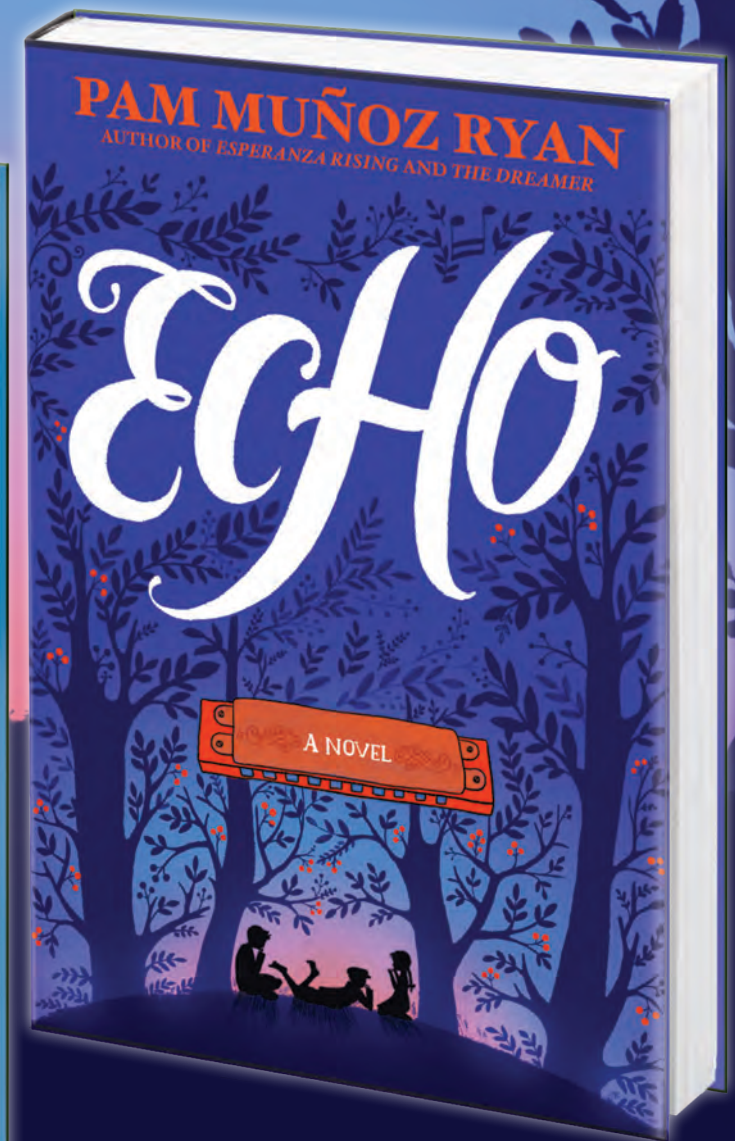
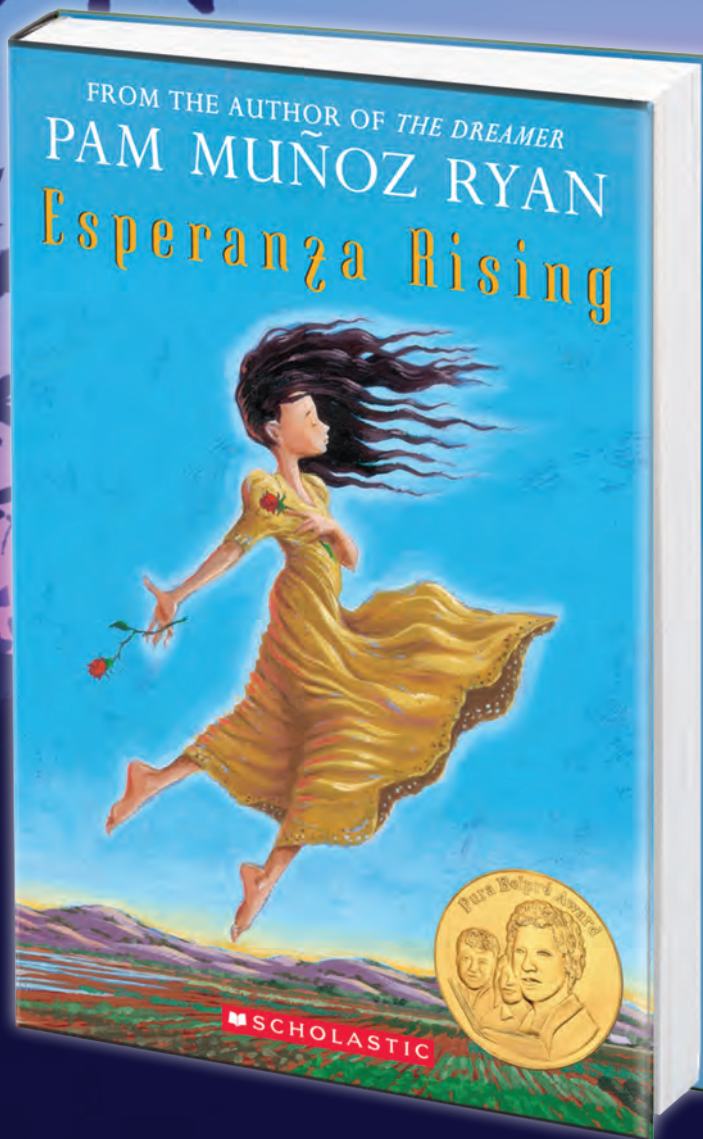


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Grades  
4-9

## Celebrating the novels of Pam Muñoz Ryan

From *Esperanza Rising* to *Echo*



Meets State Standards Including Common Core—SEE INSIDE

Dear Friends,

One day in 2010, at a historical society in California, I was researching what I thought would be my next book, when I came upon a striking photograph that led me down a completely different path.

The picture showed a classroom of children sitting on the steps of a country school in 1931, each holding a harmonica. When I asked the docent about the photo, she said, "That was our elementary school harmonica band. Back then, almost every school had one."

Really? School bands dedicated just to harmonica playing? I had never heard of such things! But my research taught me that not only was there a harmonica band movement in the United States, there was also Albert H. Hoxie's then-famous Philadelphia Harmonica Band of Wizards, the sixty-member band of boys who played in Charles Lindbergh's parade, and for three presidents, including Franklin Roosevelt at his inauguration. And the band used the same model of harmonica as the students in the country school—the Hohner Marine Band from Germany.

I began to wonder about two harmonica-playing characters in different parts of the country: Mike, an orphan boy in Philadelphia who wanted to be in Hoxie's band, which was full of orphans. And Ivy Maria, a girl in a country school harmonica band in Southern California. My mind made the inevitable leaps. What if by chance my characters, at different points in time, played the same harmonica? And if it was the same harmonica, where had it originated and who owned it before them?

After corresponding with the Hohner Harmonica company in Trossingen, Germany, I traveled there to tour the campus of the largest harmonica factory in the world. I learned about the six-pointed star on the harmonicas and how it was removed when Hitler became chancellor, and about the young apprentices who used to work at the factory. It was there that Friedrich's story began to unfold, along with the premise for the book: one harmonica that journeyed into three characters' lives—a mysterious harmonica that somehow contributed to each character's ability to carry on through dark times, infused them with strength and vision, and showed them the light of hope.

How had the harmonica become possessed of such powers? I imagined the backstory of the harmonica itself, which grew into an original fairy tale—complete with a midwife's prophecy and a witch's devious spell—that would frame the three stories.

But would a prophecy and a witch's spell feel believable in the context of a largely realistic novel? In the Hohner Harmonica museum, I made an astonishing discovery and found my answer. Among the commemorative and antique harmonicas was the improbable evidence of a real-life miracle. And precisely what I needed to break the witch's spell. I hope you are intrigued enough to read *Echo* and find out how a simple harmonica could hold the power to save and change lives.

With gratitude for all you do for readers,



Pam Muñoz Ryan

## About the Author

Pam Muñoz Ryan is the author recipient of the National Education Association's Civil and Human Rights Award, the winner of the Virginia Hamilton Literary Award for Multicultural Literature, and she has twice received the Willa Cather Award for writing. She has written over thirty books for young people, from picture books for the very young to middle grade novels which include: *Esperanza Rising*, *Becoming Naomi León*, *Riding Freedom*, *Paint the Wind*, *The Dreamer*, and most recently, *Echo*. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree from San Diego State University and lives near San Diego with her family. For more information, visit [www.PamMunozRyan.com](http://www.PamMunozRyan.com).

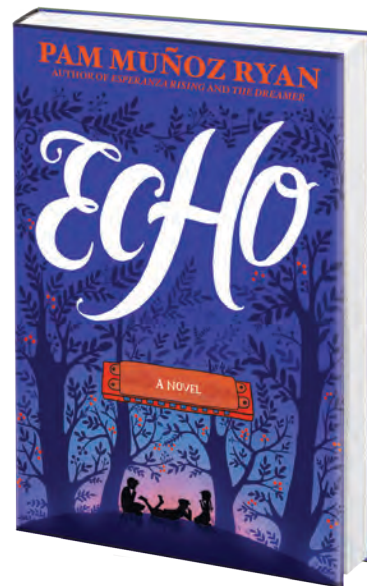


Photo © Sean B. Masterson 2010



# About *Echo*

Otto's extraordinary encounter the day he is lost in a forbidden forest involves him in a strange destiny—a quest given to him by three mysterious sisters, a prophecy, and a very special harmonica. Many years later, the lives of three young people become entwined with that same harmonica. Friedrich must find a way to escape with his father from the growing menace of Nazi Germany, but how can they do that when things are getting more dangerous every day? Mike is desperate to find a better place for himself and his younger brother than the orphanage where they live near Philadelphia, but perhaps the solution, when it comes, is too good to be true. Ivy longs for her migrant family to have a permanent home in the farming country of California, but does it have to be at the expense of another family's misfortune? What is the secret of the mysterious harmonica that comes into each of these lives, and how will it help to fulfill a promise made long before they were born?



## Discussion Questions

### Key Ideas and Details

1. What clues in the prologue story help you determine when and where Otto's story takes place? How does the harmonica help him to find his way home? Why will no one believe his story about Eins, Zwei, and Drei? CCSS.RL.5-9.1

2. Discuss the meaning of the midwife's prophecy in the tale: "Your fate is not yet sealed. Even in the darkest night, a star will shine, a bell will chime, a path will be revealed." How does this prophecy apply to the lives of Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy, as well as to Otto and the sisters in the tale? CCSS.RL.5-9.2

3. Compare the lives of Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy. How are their challenges similar and how are they different? How do each of these characters show courage and determination? How does the harmonica play a role in the journey of each? CCSS.RL.5-9.3

4. Discuss the role of adult characters in these stories. Which adults are positive role models and how do they help the children to grow in confidence and understanding? Which adults are negative influences and how do the children react to them? CCSS.RL.5-9.3

5. Discuss the role of siblings in the lives of Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy. What is the relationship of each to his or her sibling? Describe how their different personalities and ages affect the way each reacts to the time and place in which they live—in Germany, in Pennsylvania, and in California. CCSS.RL.5-9.3

### Craft and Structure

6. Discuss the first line of the fairy tale: "Once, long before enchantment was eclipsed by doubt . . ." How does the choice of words in that sentence set a tone for the book? CCSS.RL.5-9.4

7. Listen to recordings of the pieces of music that introduce each part of this story. How do the songs feature in the lives of each main character? Discuss the importance of music in their lives. CCSS.RL.5-9.5

8. This story is told from many points of view. Discuss how the author establishes a unique voice for each of the main characters. Why do Friedrich's, Mike's, and Ivy's sections each end with a "cliffhanger" moment and unanswered questions about what will happen to them next? CCSS.RL.5-9.6

9. At the end of section four, what is the significance of the last line? ". . . and connected by the same silken thread" (p. 583). How does that phrase echo the themes of the novel in general, and in particular the three sisters? CCSS.RL.5-9.5

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

10. Look up information about the town of Trossingen in Germany. Why is this place referred to as a "music town"? Compare what you know about Trossingen from the story to what you can learn from information sources. CCSS.RI.5-9.7

11. The main characters in *Echo* are fictional, but there are historical figures and events mentioned throughout the book. Look up information about Adolf Hitler, Matthias Hohner, Albert Hoxie, Larry Adler, Pearl Harbor, Japanese internment camps, and the bracero program. Compare what you find in information sources to what you have learned about each of these topics in the story. CCSS.RI.5-9.8

12. Read fiction and nonfiction books with similar themes and settings to compare to *Echo*. To understand Elisabeth's point of view in Part One, for example, read *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti (Scholastic, 2005). For Part Two, compare Mike's plight to that of another Irish-American boy in *The Journal of Sean Sullivan* by William Durbin (Scholastic, 1999), and for Part Three, contrast Ivy's journey to that of Esperanza in *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (Scholastic, 2000). Compare the story of "A Witch, a Kiss, a Prophecy" to fairy tales in collections such as those of the Brothers Grimm. CCSS.RL.5-9.9

# About *Esperanza Rising*

This modern classic celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015.

Esperanza thought she'd always live with her family on their ranch in Mexico—she'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home, and servants. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California during the Great Depression, and to settle in a camp for Mexican farm workers. Esperanza isn't ready for the hard labor, financial struggles, or lack of acceptance she now faces. When their new life is threatened, Esperanza must find a way to rise above her difficult circumstances—Mama's life, and her own, depend on it.



## Discussion Questions

### Key Ideas and Details

1. Why does Esperanza's father have a special feeling for his land? Discuss the characters of Tío Luis and Tío Marco. How are they different from Esperanza's father? CCSS.RL.5-9.1
2. Compare the train rides Esperanza and Miguel took as young children to the one they take to California. How does their relationship change after they move? CCSS.RL.5-9.2
3. How does seeing the strikers' camp affect Esperanza? Why do Josefina and Hortensia tell Esperanza and Miguel to shop only at the Japanese store? What does Alfonso mean when he tells Miguel that Mr. Yakota is "getting rich on other people's bad manners"? CCSS.RL.5-9.3

### Craft and Structure

4. Discuss the Mexican proverbs at the beginning of the book and how they relate to the story. CCSS.RL.5-9.4
5. Esperanza and her friends look forward to their Quinceañeras, after which they will be old enough to marry, "rising to the positions of their mothers before them."

Compare this idea of "rising" to the rest of the story and to the title. How does the meaning change? CCSS.RL.5-9.4

6. Why does the author name each chapter for a fruit or vegetable? What is the significance of the rose cuttings that Alfonso and Miguel carry with them from Mexico? CCSS.RL.5-9.5

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Listen to the audiobook production of *Esperanza Rising*. How does the listening experience enhance your feeling for the story and your understanding of the characters? CCSS.RL.5-9.7
8. Compare the story of Esperanza to that of Billy Jo in *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse (Scholastic, 1997). Compare the poetic format of Hesse's story to Ryan's prose style. Compare these books to a factual telling of the time period like *Children of the Great Depression* by Russell Freedman (Clarion, 2005). How do these different genres and styles of storytelling help you to understand a different era of American history? CCSS.RL.5-9.9 and CCSS.RI.5-9.9

## Exploring Thematic Connections in the Novels of Pam Muñoz Ryan

### Names

In the fairy tale in *Echo*, the three sisters are given numbers for names. What is the importance of a name? Discuss the meaning of the name Esperanza and how the names in *Echo* reflect the characters' cultures and personalities.

### Journeys

Each of the characters in *Echo* is involved in contemplating a journey. How do they react to the need to move away from the place they have been living? Compare their journeys to that of Esperanza and her mother. How does each journey reflect the growth and development of these young people?

### Freedom

For the characters in *Echo* and for Esperanza, freedom means being in charge of your own life. How do each of these characters take control of their lives? Why is the quest for freedom such an important theme in their lives?

### Family

Compare the different families and how they interact with or reject each other throughout these stories. Which family members are relied on the most?

CCSS.RL.5-9.2

# Books by Pam Muñoz Ryan

## Novels



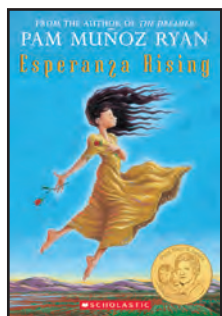
### Echo

Ages 10 & up • 592 pages • 2015  
HC: 978-0-439-87402-1 • \$19.99 (CAN \$21.99)  
EBK: 978-0-545-57650-5 • \$19.99 (CAN \$19.99)  
Audiobook versions also available.

“This is a beautifully crafted story . . . it has mystery, adventure, and a powerful sense of hope and heart. A masterpiece.”

— Christopher Paul Curtis

- ★ “Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy are brought together by music and destiny in an emotionally triumphant conclusion . . . Meticulous historical detail and masterful storytelling.”  
— *School Library Journal*, starred review
- ★ “A grand narrative that examines the power of music to inspire beauty in a world overrun with fear and intolerance, it’s worth every moment of readers’ time.”— *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



### Esperanza Rising

Ages 8-12 • 272 pages • 2000  
HC: 978-0-439-12041-8 • \$17.99 (CAN \$21.99)  
PB: 978-0-439-12042-5 • \$6.99 (CAN \$8.99)  
Span PB: 978-0-439-39885-5 • \$6.99 (CAN \$8.99)  
EBK: 978-0-545-70479-3 • \$6.99 (CAN \$6.99)  
Audiobook Edition: Narrated by Trini Alvarado, Listening Library, Unabridged edition, 2001. 15th Anniversary in 2015!

**ALA Pura Belpré Award**  
**ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults**  
**Américas Award Honor Book**  
**IRA Notable Book for a Global Society**  
**Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year**

- ★ “This well-written novel belongs in all collections.”  
— *School Library Journal*, starred review
- ★ “Told in a lyrical, fairy tale-like style . . . Readers will be swept up by vivid descriptions.”— *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

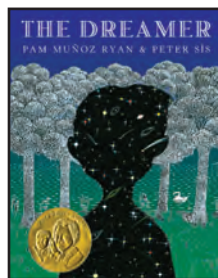


### Riding Freedom

Illustrated by Brian Selznick  
Ages 8-12 • 144 pages • 1999  
PB: 978-0-439-08796-4 • \$6.99 (CAN \$7.99)  
EBK: 978-0-545-36029-6 • \$6.99 (CAN \$6.99)

**IRA Teachers’ Choice**  
**Texas Bluebonnet Award, Noteworthy**  
**California Young Reader Medal**

- ★ “Ebullient . . . tautly structured . . . With a pacing that moves along at a gallop, this is a skillful execution of a fascinating historical detail.”— *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

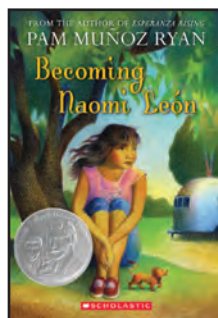


### The Dreamer

Illustrated by Peter Sís  
Ages 8-12 • 400 pages • 2010  
HC: 978-0-439-26970-4 • \$17.99 (CAN \$21.99)  
PB: 978-0-439-26998-8 • \$8.99 (CAN \$9.99)  
Span PB (El Soñador): 978-0-545-17600-2 • \$8.99 (CAN \$9.99)  
EBK: 978-0-545-29470-6 • \$8.99 (CAN \$8.99)  
Audiobook versions also available.

**ALA Pura Belpré Award**  
**ALA Notable**  
**Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book**  
**Kirkus Best Children’s Book**

- ★ “Elegant and measured, deeply rewarding and eminently readable.”— *Booklist*, starred review
- ★ “Rich, resonant and enchanting.”— *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- ★ “[A] masterful tribute.”— *Horn Book*, starred review
- ★ “Immaculately crafted and inspiring.”  
— *Publishers Weekly*, starred review
- ★ “Absorbing—the perfect marriage of text and art.”  
— *School Library Journal*, starred review



### Becoming Naomi León

Ages 8-12 • 256 pages • 2004  
PB: 978-0-439-26997-1 • \$6.99 (CAN \$8.99)  
Span PB: 978-0-439-75572-6 • \$6.99 (CAN \$7.99)  
EBK: 978-0-545-53232-7 • \$6.99 (CAN \$6.99)

**ALA Pura Belpré Award**  
**ALA Schneider Family Book Award**

- ★ “Sure-handed storytelling.”  
— *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



### Paint the Wind

Ages 8-12 • 352 pages • 2007  
PB: 978-0-545-10176-9 • \$7.99 (CAN \$8.99)  
Span PB (Pinta el Viento): 978-0-545-07789-7  
\$7.99 (CAN \$8.99)  
Audiobook versions also available.

**Willa Cather Award Finalist**  
**Pennsylvania Young Reader Award**



# Books by Pam Muñoz Ryan

## Picture Books



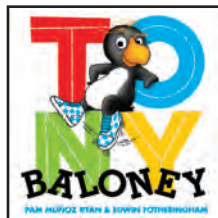
### Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride

Illustrated by Brian Selznick  
Ages 6-8 • 40 pages • 1999  
HC: 978-0-590-96075-5 • \$19.99 (CAN \$21.99)

**ALA Notable Children's Book**  
**IRA Notable Book for a Global Society**  
**ABA Book Sense Book of the Year Finalist**  
**IRA Teachers' Choice**

★ “[A] compelling slice from the lives of two determined, outspoken and passionate women.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



### Tony Baloney

Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham  
Ages 4-8 • 40 pages • 2011  
HC: 978-0-545-23135-0 • \$16.99 (CAN \$19.99)

★ “Ryan’s exuberant story takes a fresh look at sibling dynamics.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



### When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson

Illustrated by Brian Selznick  
Ages 6-8 • 40 pages • 2002  
HC: 978-0-439-26967-4 • \$17.99 (CAN \$21.99)

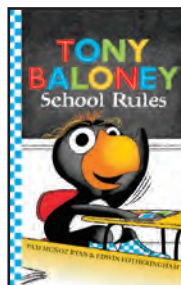
**ALA Robert F. Sibert Honor Book**  
**ALA Notable Children's Book**  
**NCTE Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts**  
**NCTE Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children**  
**Parents' Choice Award**  
**School Library Journal Best Book of the Year**

★ “Perfectly paced and perfectly pitched . . . a bravura performance.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Linguistically and aesthetically, the book is a marvel of unified design . . . Share this feast for the eyes and the soul with a wide audience.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review

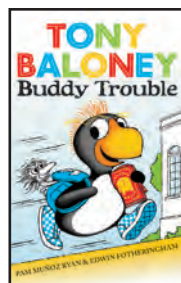
★ “Ryan’s narrative smoothly integrates biographical details with lyrics from the gospel songs Anderson made famous.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



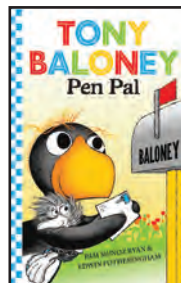
### Tony Baloney School Rules

Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham  
Ages 5-7 • 40 pages • 2013  
HC: 978-0-545-48166-3 • \$6.99 (CAN \$7.99)



### Tony Baloney Buddy Trouble

Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham  
Ages 5-7 • 40 pages • 2014  
HC: 978-0-545-48169-4 • \$6.99 (CAN \$7.99)



### Tony Baloney Pen Pal

Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham  
Ages 5-7 • 40 pages • 2015  
HC: 978-0-545-65037-2 • \$6.99 (CAN \$7.99)  
EBK: 978-0-545-65128-8 • \$6.99 (CAN \$7.99)



### Mice and Beans

Illustrated by Joe Cepeda  
Ages 4-8 • 32 pages • 2001  
HC: 978-0-439-18303-1 • \$17.99 (CAN \$21.99)

**ALA Notable Children's Book**  
**Child Magazine Best Book of the Year**  
**Parenting Magazine Gold Award Winner**

Discussion guide prepared by **Connie Rockman**, Youth Literature Consultant, and editor of the 8th, 9th, and 10th Books of Junior Authors and Illustrators.

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